

STUDIES ON THE FAUNA OF CURAÇAO AND OTHER
CARIBBEAN ISLANDS: No. 64.

MAMMALIAN REMAINS FROM AN INDIAN SITE
ON CURAÇAO

by

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The animal remains (mostly of shells, fish, and turtles) collected by Mr. H. R. VAN HEEKEREN and Mr. C. J. DU RY at the Indian site Sint Jan II, Curaçao, in March, 1960, include a few specimens of mammals. As was the case with the Indian site Santa Cruz, on Aruba (HOOIJER, 1960), several forms are represented that are no longer extant on the island, although this does not imply that all of them were strictly endemic at the time of formation of the Indian refuse heaps; they may have been imported for food or other purposes. The material dates from 1000-1500 A.D., and is therefore late pre-Columbian. The following forms are present:

Order EDENTATA

Family MEGALONYCHIDAE

Cf. *Paulocnus petrifactus* Hooijer

An imperfect axis vertebra appears to represent a ground sloth like *Paulocnus petrifactus*, recently recorded from late Quaternary beds on the Tafelberg Santa Barbara, eastern Curaçao (HOOIJER, 1962). It belonged to an immature individual, for the posterior epiphysis is not fused with the body. The odontoid and right trans-

verse processes are missing, and only the left atlas facet is preserved. The neural arch is wide, and the neural canal large; the transverse process is very weak, and the vertebrarterial canal is open behind. The highest point of the spinous process is in front of the posterior articular facets — even more markedly so than in *Nothrotherium* (Stock, 1925, p. 56, pl. 4 figs. 3–4). In *Megalonyx* (Leidy, 1855, p. 21, pl. 7 fig. 3) the greatest height of the spinous process is reached above the posterior facets. Unfortunately the axis of *Paulocnus* is as yet unknown, but the size of the Sint Jan vertebra is about right for *Paulocnus petrifactus*, intermediate between that of *Megalocnus rodens* Leidy from Cuba and that of *Acratocnus odontrigonus* Anthony from Puerto Rico (Hooijer, 1962). Although the absence of more diagnostic specimens leaves some doubt as to the identity of the Sint Jan ground sloth, it would seem to represent the endemic *Paulocnus*, which thus appears to have been contemporary with man in Curaçao.

The closely related *Megalocnus* is associated with ceramics in Cuba (Harrington, 1921; Aguayo, 1950, cited in Martin, Sabels, and Shutler, 1961, p. 118) and with pottery, as well as with bones of man and the domestic pig in Hispaniola (Miller, 1929), while *Acratocnus* of Puerto Rico also survived till the advent of man, for material of *Acratocnus* from Puerto Rico, kindly sent to me by Dr. Malcolm McKenna, includes a phalanx of a domestic pig. Consequently, in Curaçao as well as in the Greater Antillean Islands, ground sloths existed as contemporaries of man, and may have been the last survivors of the group.

Order RODENTIA

Family DASYPROCTIDAE

Dasyprocta spec.

The aguti, widespread in the South and Central American Tropics, occurs in many of the Lesser Antilles including Aruba (Hooijer, 1960). Its presence in late pre-Columbian Curaçao is attested by two mandibular bodies lacking the incisors, one right and one left, but

not of the same individual. They clearly belong to *Dasyprocta*, but no specific determination has been attempted. These animals seem to have been carried from island to island by man.

Agouti paca (L.) subsp.

A left body and ramus of the mandible, with the incisor, belong to the paca, the present range of which is Tropical America from Mexico to southern Brazil, Paraguay, and Peru. The specimen from Sint Jan has an artificial hole in the angular portion, and was possibly used as a charm or talisman. This is the first record for Curaçao, but importation by the Indians cannot, of course, be ruled out.

Order ARTIODACTYLA

Family CERVIDAE

Odocoileus gymnotus (Wiegmann) subsp.

The species of deer surviving in Curaçao is represented in the Sint Jan II collection by an incomplete and apparently juvenile metatarsal. This form is present in the earlier Sint Jan (A) collection made by Professor J. P. B. DE JOSSELIN DE JONG (HOOIJER, 1960).

Mazama gouazoubira (G. Fischer) subsp.

The small South American brocket occurring in Venezuela and Colombia was kept or eaten by the Indians of Curaçao: in the Sint Jan II collection there are an antler and the distal part of a metatarsal belonging to this species. Whether it was truly native to the island is, of course, doubtful.

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